

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on another matter, this week, the Senate will continue restoring balance to the Federal courts by considering more of President Biden's judicial appointments.

Over the next 2 days, we will consider Deborah Boardman to serve as district judge in Maryland and Candace Jackson-Akiwumi to serve as judge on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Together, Ms. Boardman and Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi have had over 20 years of experience as Federal defenders.

I believe that bringing professional diversity as well as personal diversity to the bench should be and is now a top priority. There are plenty of former prosecutors and corporate lawyers wearing black robes. It is time that some voting rights attorneys, civil rights attorneys, and former Federal defenders, like these two nominees, bring their perspectives to the bench.

A final vote on Ms. Boardman's nomination will come this afternoon, and then we will proceed to the nomination of Ms. Jackson-Akiwumi, which we will finish before the end of the week. Again, the Senate will not leave for the week until we finish considering these judges. The Democratic majority in the Senate will continue to swiftly fill judicial vacancies.

On a related note, today, Chairman PETERS will ask the Senate to approve two critical cyber security nominees: Jen Easterly to be the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and Robin Carnahan to be the Administrator of the GSA. Both of these Agencies play a critical role in our Nation's cyber security.

The threat of ransomware attacks and other cyber crimes is on the rise from State actors as well as cyber bandits who were given sanctuary by our adversaries. We need people at the helm on these important Agencies to focus on hardening our Nation's cyber security. This should be a completely nonpartisan issue, and my Republican friends should not object.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in addition to our important work on judicial appointments, the Senate is moving forward on multiple legislative proposals to make historic investments in our Nation's infrastructure.

We have a chance in this Congress to get something big and bold done on infrastructure—something we haven't managed in a very long time. If we want America to prosper in the 21st century, we can't do it with infrastructure that is stuck in the last century. This is our chance to update, modernize, repair, and rebuild for another century of American economic growth, creating thousands upon thousands of good-paying jobs in the process.

Later today, Speaker PELOSI and I will meet with representatives from

the White House to discuss the next steps on this very topic. Here in the Senate, Democratic members of the Budget Committee continue to build on the fruitful conversations we had last week. In fact, earlier today, I spoke with all of our committee chairs about a forthcoming budget resolution.

As I have said, discussions about infrastructure are progressing along two tracks. The first is bipartisan, and the second incorporates elements of the President's American jobs and families plan. The second track is something we must support even if it doesn't get any Republican support. For several weeks, the trains have been chugging down both tracks quite well. When the Senate returns after the July 4 work period, it will be time to take the next step forward.

This summer, the Senate will begin considering the fiscal 2022 budget resolution and a bipartisan infrastructure bill on the floor. It is my hope to have both a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a budget resolution for the Senate to consider this summer. I believe the progress we have made in recent weeks will ultimately produce the result that will set our economy on a path to prosperity for generations to come.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, one final matter: student loans. Today, I have joined Senator WARREN and a number of my House and Senate colleagues to urge the Biden administration to extend the pause on payments and interest for the vast majority of Federal student loans.

For millions of student borrowers, one of the most difficult challenges is balancing their debt with their dreams of starting a career, starting a family, and buying a home. When the pandemic hit, these challenges were magnified a hundredfold. Job opportunities disappeared, and our economy came to a halt. The pause on student loan repayment during the pandemic was a life-altering policy that allowed tens of millions of young people to escape financial ruin.

Right now, the current pause on repayment of student debt is set to expire on September 30. I believe that is too soon. Our economy is still recovering. Americans are still pulling themselves up and dusting themselves off after one of the greatest economic crises in our history. The October 1 expiration date could risk putting millions of student loan borrowers back into financial hardship.

Very simply, I am urging the Biden administration to extend the pause on student loan repayment by another 6 months, until March 2022. Even as the economy recovers, young people, borrowers with a load of debt, will struggle more than most to get back on their feet. Why not give them a little more breathing room?

I urge the Biden administration to extend the pause, and I will continue

working with Senator WARREN on ways to provide even more comprehensive, life-changing student loan forgiveness—a policy, I believe, that will expand opportunity for millions, millions of young Americans.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

RUSSIA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, for the first time earlier this month, President Biden traveled to Europe. The primary purpose for this trip was to engage with some of America's closest friends and allies, but the agenda also included a one-on-one meeting with a staunch adversary, Vladimir Putin.

The President took office armed with a great deal of tough talk on Russia. He called his counterpart a "killer" and a "KGB thug" and warned he would "pay [the] price" for interference in U.S. elections. The world wondered whether this rhetoric would be underpinned by tough action. I certainly hoped it would.

Back in January, I made it clear that if the Biden administration was serious about "imposing real costs on Moscow," it would "find willing partners on Capitol Hill." But so far, there have been few encouraging signs for those of us who take Russia's threats very seriously.

Remember, after less than a week in office, President Biden agreed to Russian requests for a full 5-year extension of the New START Treaty, no strings attached. He gave it up for free, undermining our leverage to extract concessions in future negotiations.

Then, his administration rolled out a budget proposal that would cut investment in defense, in real terms—short-changing the modernization we need to keep pace with both Russia and China.

And 2 weeks ago, the President left for Europe, having already given the Kremlin two other gifts: a high-profile summit that experts predicted Putin would use to help legitimize his regime at home and abroad and a waiver of sanctions on the Russian-owned company behind a lucrative gas pipeline project.

So I will repeat for President Biden the same warning I offered to the previous administration: The Kremlin is

not our friend, and it is high time our actions started reflecting that.

Back home, of course, the Biden administration has proven it knows perfectly well how to crack down on energy pipeline projects when it wants to. In fact, on the day he left for Europe, the firm behind the Keystone XL Pipeline project announced that the President's revocation of its construction permit would be fatal. That is the end of it. What a striking image. The President of the United States heads overseas and meets with a major adversary whom he has handed a major geopolitical win, and here at home, the last nail goes in the coffin of the job-killing crusade against reliable North American energy that he said on day one was a priority.

It is a tale of two pipelines: the decisive rejection of thousands of American jobs here at home and the empowerment of America's adversaries abroad. And it is only the latest sign that the Biden administration's strategic priorities are simply out of order.

Recall, this administration rushed to rejoin a climate agreement that has failed to hold major signatories to their commitments on reducing emissions, even as the United States recorded multiple years of reductions on our own.

This administration made it harder to cap our abundant and domestic energy, even at the risk of greater reliance on imports from countries with lower environmental standards. And, of course, they proposed to squander years of accumulating economic pressure on Iran in exchange for no meaningful concessions on its nuclear ambitions or regional aggression.

So when President Biden elected to pass on another opportunity to check the influence of a major adversary, we had heard this story before.

Here in Congress, opposition to the completion of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline has been vigorous and bipartisan. Last year's Defense authorization, which earned 84 votes here in the Senate, expanded the scope of sanctions against critical entities involved in its construction. We are talking about a project that would give Putin a new artery of influence in Western Europe and rob Ukraine of critical leverage over the way Russian energy currently flows throughout the region.

But, apparently, the Biden administration's own opposition to the project was just rhetorical. When the chips were down, the President used a waiver to avoid having to place sanctions on the biggest company behind the project and its CEO—a Putin crony. According to reports, his decision even overruled the objections of senior diplomats and the concerns of his very own Secretary of State.

Oddly enough, the administration's decision to snuff out union jobs in the energy sector here at home didn't seem to prompt as vigorous an internal debate. In fact, President Biden's Executive action to kill the Keystone XL has

been followed by a steady stream of radical proposals that illustrate just how deep his administration is in thrall to the environmental fringe.

Under the guise of infrastructure, they pitched trillions of dollars in Federal spending, aligned so closely with most liberal interests in Congress that the authors—the authors—of the Green New Deal boasted President Biden's agenda had their manifesto's DNA all over it: unprecedented spending on electric vehicles, huge increases in funds for transit projects that disproportionately benefit blue States on the coast, and plans to pick winners and losers in the market for affordable, reliable American energy.

So American workers know what a thriving energy sector looks like. It is exactly what Republicans spent 4 years working to encourage here at home.

As a matter of fact, if you hit pause on Washington Democrats' radical climate rhetoric, you will notice that smart energy policy isn't limited by political stripe. For years, the liberal government up in Canada has recognized pipelines as a safe and efficient way to connect people with affordable, reliable energy and grow what is already the largest sector of United States-Canada trade. So it was hardly surprising to hear one Canadian official greet President Biden's decision to sink the Keystone XL Pipeline as "an insult"—an insult—or to read that the Canadian firm behind the project is now pursuing legal action to recoup its investment.

So capitulation to our rivals, painful blows to our neighbors, legitimizing corrupt foreign leaders, and jamming hard-working Americans—whatever his motives, and despite his own rhetoric, the consequences of President Biden's actions are already clear.

It is not too late to impose real costs on Russia's pipeline windfall and provide serious, lethal support to Ukraine and other vulnerable States on the frontlines of Putin's aggression. It is not too late to get serious about the defense investment that bipartisan assessments say that we need—that we need—in order to compete with China and Russia. It is not too late to recommit to bipartisanship on infrastructure and on energy and show radical climate activists the door.

I hope the Biden administration changes courses sometime soon.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, what is the weather like in Las Vegas? What is it like in Reno? I am not sure, but I will bet it is hot. And the reason I am sure that it is likely to be hot is the weather forecast.

I looked at that map, and it was solid red in the western half of the United States, with extreme high temperatures at a level never recorded. They said in the city of Seattle, there have

only been a handful of times that they have had temperatures over 100 degrees in that city. It is going to happen again this weekend, at least that is the prediction. That is the weather forecast.

It is not just confined to the blue coastal States, as some call them. We have a drought in the Midwest. I hope it ends soon, but when it comes to corn country—Iowa, Illinois, Indiana—we are worried. I hope it doesn't happen, but it could, and we know it can happen soon. And then in the southeastern part of the United States, there are extreme storms—rains they haven't seen before.

I just say that after listening to the Republican leader describe the situation with the environment, wondering if he reads the papers or talks to people back home because extreme weather is happening all over the United States, and it isn't just in Republican areas or Democratic areas; it is virtually everywhere.

So when President Biden comes in and says: Shouldn't we do something about this for the good of our children and our grandchildren? Shouldn't we be willing to sacrifice a little bit? Shouldn't we be willing to change some if it means that they are going to have a planet that is worth living on—about 10 years ago, I started asking my farmers who come and visit me from Illinois a couple of questions. These are good people. They never vote for me, I know that, but I still like meeting with them. They are good people. They bring their wives. They dress up in their suits. They take it seriously. They are coming to Washington. This is before COVID-19, of course. And they would sit upstairs in my conference room. There would be about 20 or 30 of them from organizations like the Farm Bureau or the corn growers or the soybean growers. And I would say to them—this is 10 years ago—how many of you believe that what we are doing on Earth is changing the environment of the Earth we live on? I mean that our human activity is having something to do with it. And I would ask for a show of hands. And the response was, not one hand would go up.

And I finally said to them: Well, things are changing. What do you think is behind all of it? And one fellow said—and he did this seriously, and I believe he was speaking from the heart—he said: "Senator, some years God sends me a drought; some years God sends me a flood; I got to deal with whatever God sends me."

I respect him for that. That is his deep-hearted belief, and it is sincere.

But I think there is more to the story. And now when I ask these same farmers the same question, I get a different response. The Illinois corn growers, looking around, thinking something is happening here in this wonderful, bountiful State that I live in. The crops that are grown traditionally are not producing what they did traditionally, unless some hybrid seeds and other fertilizers are being used. There